

THE EFFECTS OF ALBUMINURIA UPON VISION

IT is well known that impairment of sight is one of the occasional phenomena of albuminuria. In the first paper by Dr. [Richard] Bright, published in *Guy's Hospital Reports* for 1832, in which, out of one hundred reported cases, he gives a detailed statement of the symptoms of ten, five of these latter had deterioration or loss of vision. Before Dr. Bright brought to light the kidney disease, cases of dropsy were recorded seventy years ago in which attention was called to the remarkable loss of vision of the patients. The origin of this symptom was ascribed to the brain, or left unaccounted for by covering up entire ignorance of the matter under the name of amaurosis. So little attention did this important damage of function excite, that at post-mortem examinations the eyeballs were not examined; and as late as 1852, in *Guy's Hospital Reports*, will be found one hundred cases of Bright's disease tabulated by Dr. Wilks, in which among the columns of symptoms no mention is made of eye lesions. In France the visual disturbance first awakened investigation. The first paper upon it was published by M. Landouzy in the *Annales d'Oculistique* for 1851. This was the year in which Prof. Helmholtz of Heidelberg, studying why, when the media of the eye are transparent, the pupillary aperture through which the light enters should not permit light to come out again, but should always appear dark, in solving this problem fell upon the invention of the ophthalmoscope. Aided by this simple yet wonderful instrument, the pathology of the deep textures of the eye may, when our limited knowledge of former days is remembered, be said to have advanced to the precision and value of an exact science. We now know that the amaurosis of albuminuria is due to a lesion of the retina, and not of the brain, in the vast majority of cases. Still further, so accurate is the knowledge afforded by the ophthalmoscope, and so great the possible diagnostic skill, that whereas the eye trouble was once regarded as simply an interesting phenomenon in the progress of Bright's disease, it has now become an index of unsuspected renal disease, and a means of diagnosis. It has happened to not a few oculists of the present day to have pointed

out the lurking malady of the kidney by the ophthalmoscope. This fact gives the occurrence of visual disorder a peculiar significance, and is reason why it should have been assigned special consideration in this discussion before the Academy.

We now are made aware that the eye trouble does not belong to the later stages of the disease exclusively, when anasarca and other symptoms, threatening life, command attention; but it occurs often at a very early period before any such grave danger has been thought of and no alarm taken. . . .

NOYES, H. D.: The effects of albuminuria upon vision. *Bull. N. Y. Acad. Med.* 2:14-20, 1862.